

# Epi Update for Friday, March 1, 2024

CENTER FOR ACUTE DISEASE EPIDEMIOLOGY (CADE)  
BUREAU OF HIV, STI, AND HEPATITIS

IOWA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Items for this week's Epi Update include

- **Spring break travel, food safety**
- **Outbreak reporting, public health response**
- **Infographic: Protect your health – Illness could be just a plane ride away**
- **Meeting announcements and training opportunities**

## **Spring break travel, food safety**

With spring break approaching, patients should be reminded of the health risks associated with domestic and international travel. CDC maintains extensive travel guidance, including guidelines customized by destination. Key points of concern include ongoing disease outbreaks or travel warnings at the destination, vaccines recommended prior to travel, and prophylactic medication to consider packing for the trip. Other guidelines include how to seek medical care at the destination, personal security, and what symptoms to look out for after returning home.

CADE and local public health partners frequently identify recent international travel as a potential exposure source when investigating cases of *E. coli*, *Salmonella*, *Shigella*, *Cryptosporidium*, and more.

Important food and water safety tips to keep in mind while travelling internationally include:

- Wash hands with soap and water before eating. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.
- Make sure cold food is served cold and hot food is served hot.
- Pre-packaged foods are generally safer options than food opened or handled by another individual.
- Wash fruits and vegetables with bottled or disinfected water, or stick to produce you can peel yourself.
- Do not drink tap water or use ice in countries where tap water might be contaminated. Avoid swallowing water while showering, and brush your teeth with bottled or disinfected water. Tap water can be disinfected by boiling, filtering, or chemically treating.

For more information about travel safety from CDC, visit [wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel](http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel).

For more food safety tips when traveling, visit [wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/page/food-water-safety](http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/page/food-water-safety).

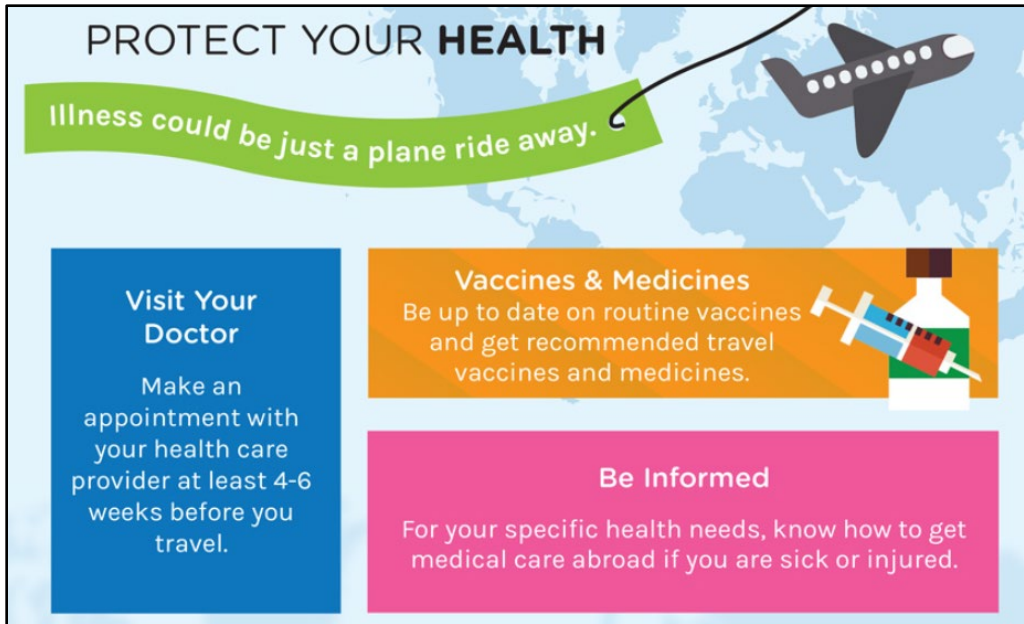
## **Outbreak reporting, public health response**

Suspected infectious disease outbreaks are immediately reportable to Iowa HHS, regardless of facility type, setting, or organism. This includes diseases not explicitly listed on the reportable disease list or when the cause of the illnesses is unknown. In 2023, CADE, local public health agencies, and federal partners collaborated to investigate 88 outbreaks occurring in a variety of settings. Influenza and norovirus were the most commonly identified cause of outbreaks in Iowa.

Outbreaks are investigated in an attempt to identify the pathogen, educate individuals to limit further spread, and prevent future illnesses by finding and mitigating the risk factors that lead to exposure. Iowa's State Hygienic Laboratory (SHL) partners with Iowa HHS to test human and environmental outbreak samples. Examples of mitigation actions include recommending norovirus-specific cleaning of contaminated public spaces, working with the Department of Inspections, Appeals, and Licensing (DIAL) to inspect restaurants, or providing targeted outbreak guidance for long-term care facilities.

For more information about infectious diseases in Iowa, visit [hhs.iowa.gov/public-health/center-acute-disease-epidemiology](https://hhs.iowa.gov/public-health/center-acute-disease-epidemiology).

### Infographic: Protect your health – Illness could be just a plane ride away



To view in full size, visit [www.cdc.gov/orr/infographics/pfe-travel.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/orr/infographics/pfe-travel.htm).

### Meeting announcements and training opportunities

Join the Iowa HHS Healthcare Associated Infections (HAI) Program Wednesday, March 13 at 12 noon for a webinar, *Effective Communication Strategies to Improve Antibiotic Prescribing*. CDC estimates at least 30% of antibiotics prescribed in outpatient settings are unnecessary, and up to 50% may be inappropriate. Iowa ranks #34 in the nation for outpatient antibiotic prescriptions per 1,000 population. Improving antibiotic prescribing involves modifying prescribing practices to align with evidence-based recommendations for diagnosis and management. Continuing education credits are available. To register, visit [www.zoomgov.com/webinar/register/WN\\_nSGsa8jWTv-lJ7htnx0C8A](https://www.zoomgov.com/webinar/register/WN_nSGsa8jWTv-lJ7htnx0C8A).

**Have a healthy and happy week!**

Center for Acute Disease Epidemiology  
800-362-2736

Bureau of HIV, STI, and Hepatitis  
515-281-6801